

Los Angeles Times

Women's smoking hinders AIDS drug

From Times wire reports

May 8, 2006

Women with AIDS, who tend to be urban and poor, get less benefit from medicines for the disease if they smoke, no matter if they smoke a lot or a little, researchers have found.

The study of 924 women found that those who smoked while taking a cocktail of anti-AIDS medicines called highly active antiretroviral therapy, or HAART, were 53% more likely to die than nonsmokers during the nearly eight-year study.

"Smoking had a fairly pervasive impact on the effect of HAART," said Joseph Feldman of SUNY downstate Medical Center, adding that the results were important because a large percentage of women with HIV were smokers.

Smokers had a higher viral load and a lower CD4 count, measurements that indicate poorer health, and the outcome was similar regardless of how much the women smoked, said the study, released last week.

Women who smoked were also 36% more likely to be diagnosed with ailments associated with AIDS, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma or wasting syndrome.

Smoking is much more common among people with less education and income — the people at greatest risk for acquiring HIV in the United States. Feldman said one result of the study should be smoking cessation programs for women with AIDS.